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ABSTRACT

The New Faculty Mentoring Program at the University of Albany (New York) began in the fall of 1986 and involved 52 participants (26 mentors, 26 new faculty). The objectives were to help the new faculty: get acquainted with the campus and its academic environment; build their teaching careers; and advance toward tenure by becoming involved in professional activities. A formative evaluation was conducted by means of a mail survey (with an 87% response rate) to determine the perceptions of new faculty and mentors about the program, the needs and expectations of new faculty, and participants' perceptions of whether the program is worth recommending to others. The results included the following: (1) 89% reported that they had mentoring meetings; (2) 74% of new faculty rated the program as important or extremely important, especially for inexperienced faculty, and most benefitted from the program; (3) 89% of the mentors rated mentoring as important; (4) mentors were satisfied with the quantity of time spent as well as the quality, whereas new faculty were satisfied with quality but not quantity; (5) while the majority of respondents would recommend the idea of a faculty mentoring program, a minority opposed the idea of the program. The weaknesses of the program were concluded to be its limited structure and the lack of followup. Results are presented in three tables. 14 references. (KM)

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Mentoring New Faculty in Higher Education Setting

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MENTORING NEW FACULTY IN HIGHER EDUCATION SETTING

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring programs that provide support for beginning professionals have developed rapidly in the past decade. Along with this increase in mentoring programs, a concomitant growth in the mentoring literature can be seen, especially in the areas of mentoring functions, mentor-protege relationships, mentoring program design and evaluation of mentoring programs. Historically, in Greek mythology, the term "mentor" have denoted a complex role involving that of both trusted guide and counselor, and the mentor-protege relationship has been seen as a deep and meaningful association (Galvez-Hjronevik, 1986). In today's society, however, the term "mentor" has become more loosely used to mean many different things including teacher, coach, trainer, positive role model, developer of talent, opener of doors, protector, sponsor, and successful leader. Schein, (1978) however, has indicated that the term mentor ought to apply to only those who play several of these roles (Schein, 1978).

Mentoring in academic settings has been perceived as important by both beginning professionals and mentors. In working with K-12 teachers, Driscoll and others (1986) advocated a mentor system for beginning teachers for three reasons: (1) from beginning teachers' perspective, mentoring programs provide valuable support during the transitional year from the teacher training institution to the classroom, (2) from the school

districts' perspective, a mentor system provides a means of increasing beginning teachers' productivity and commitment, and (3) from a staff development perspective, mentor systems benefit experienced teachers, who grow professional through their new professional roles. Several studies have identified key variables and functions that should be considered when designing and studying mentor settings. After completing a comprehensive review of literature on mentoring in public schools, Galvez-Hjornevik (1986) suggests that the mentoring relationship be voluntary and that age and gender factors be considered before mentor-protege pairs are established. Busch (1985) studied mentoring relationship between professors and graduate students from mentors' point of view and indicated that mentors feel that mentoring is important to themselves as well as to their students. Mentors indicated that the benefits of being a mentor come from the excitement /fulfillment of seeing someone grow professionally and personally and that efforts to be stimulating to their mentees kept mentors on the cutting edge of their field. Huffman and Leak's study (1986) revealed that, to maximize the effectiveness of mentoring, mentors and beginning teachers should teach the same content and work at the same grade level.

Several variables have also been found to be important in terms of establishing and improving formalized mentoring programs, Gray and Gray (1985) specified five functions of successful mentors: exposing proteges to new opportunities, coaching and sponsoring them, protecting and challenging them. Blackburn, Chapman, and Cameron (1981) found that the mentor-protege relationship is a symbiotic partnership at higher

education. The stature and accomplishment of the mentors are important to both the academic productivity and the advancement of the protege. Phillips-Jones (1983) suggests that top management (administration) support and proper publicity for the mentoring program are important along with the use of volunteer participation. Kram (1985) proposes an organizational development approach to improve the mentoring process which involves defining the objectives and scope of the program, diagnosing the individual and organizational circumstance, implementing mentoring program, and evaluating the intervention to determine what modifications are needed. Farren (1984) also offered some guiding principles in developing formal mentoring programs: (1) Assume the voluntary participation of mentors, (2) Minimize the rules and maximized the mentor's personal freedom, (3) Create networking possibilities for the mentees. (4) Share and negotiate expectations between mentors and mentees, and (5) Reward mentors and increase their visibility.

Evaluation and monitoring of mentoring program has also received some attention. Dricoll and others (1985) suggests that mentor systems be monitored on several levels to determine (1) whether the beginning teachers are receiving the kind of assistance they need or want, (2) how mentors feel about their new roles, and (3) the structural and procedural aspects of the systems.

Although, there is a considerable literature and research on mentoring programs in business and educational settings such as public school systems, research on mentoring new faculty in higher education institution has been meager. The present study

is an evaluation effort made to provide information of an initial faculty mentoring program in a higher education institution.

The Program

The New Faculty Mentoring Program at the University of Albany was first implemented in the fall of 1986. At the request of the Office of Academic Affairs, all new junior faculty members were to be mentored by experienced faculty members on a one-to-one basis throughout the first academic year. In general, the objectives of the faculty mentoring program are:

(1) to help the new faculty members get acquainted with the campus as a place to work and to become familiar with its academic environment,

(2) to assist the new faculty members in building their teaching career in the academic institution through the help of experienced faculty members, and

(3) to help the new faculty advance toward tenure by becoming actively involved in professional activities including research, professional service, and the establishment of a professional identity.

In format, the mentoring program was loosely structured. It required that a mentor, an experienced faculty member at the University of Albany, be assigned to a new junior faculty. Mentors were informed via letter that they were expected to meet periodically with the new faculty members throughout the initial academic year. It was suggested that possible ideas of mentoring include not only answering the questions raised by the new

faculty but also sharing a wide range of information with their new colleagues, including department idiosyncrasies (concerning faculty, staff, students, facilities), instructional techniques (getting complimentary texts; selecting and ordering a text; getting ECC/audio visual equipment, etc), and methods of developing a research program (which agencies have funds, what language tends to impress proposal reviewers, which conferences are productive and which are not). In other words, the mentors were expected to keep a supportive eye on the new faculty members.

Purpose of Evaluation

Since the program was in its initial stage, a formative evaluation was commissioned to determine how the program had been operating, what its strengths and weaknesses were, and what the overall perceptions of new faculty members and mentors were. In order to determine whether the mentoring program had in fact helped the new faculty members, the evaluation addressed the following components:

(1) The implementation of the mentoring program, including how the program is operating, and the nature and content of

(2) New faculty perceptions of the mentoring program as an aid in establishing their teaching career and their professional development.

(3) Mentors' perceptions of mentoring program.

(4) Needs and expectations of the new faculty, in terms of professional assistance from their mentors.

(5) Participants' perceptions on whether the mentoring program is worth recommending to others.

METHODOLOGY

Program Participants

All 52 program participants (26 mentors , 26 new faculty) in 22 departments in the University of Albany were surveyed through on-campus mail. With two mailings sent, an 87% response rate (N=46) was obtained. Among them, 52% (N=24) were mentors respondents and 48% (N=22) were new faculty respondents. Out of the 46 returned questionnaires 41 were usable, the other five reported that either they were never informed of the mentoring program or that the mentoring relationships were never made official. According to the survey results, mentors were selected in three ways: 46% of the mentors were selected by their department chairs, others volunteered (23%) to serve as mentors, still others (27%) became mentors because of similar sub-disciplinary interests or similar research areas. The mean age of the mentors is 48 and 91% of them are male. The teaching experience of the mentors range from seven years to forty years (Mean=19, SD=9).

Instrument

Two questionnaires were developed for the purpose of this evaluation, one for the mentors, the other for the new faculty

members. The two questionnaires asked almost parallel questions, so that the responses from the two populations could be compared. The instruments include both open-ended questions and Likert type items. Basically, the questionnaires consisted of three parts: Part I verified the implementation of mentoring program in terms of frequency of mentoring meetings and the content of these meetings. Part II consisted of 12 Likert type items which elicited respondents' perceptions and opinions of the program. Part III focused on the mentor selection process and suggestions for modification for future programs.

RESULTS

Implementation of the Program

The implementation of the mentoring program was verified with 89% of the respondents reporting that they had been meeting either formally or informally for mentoring purposes (see Table 1). Among those who responded, 39% of the program participants said they meet one to five times over the semester, 33% met 6 to 10 times, 28% met more than 10 times. Sixty-five percent said they spent less than 30 minutes per meeting; 35% spent between 40 to 60 minutes at each mentoring meeting.

Among the 46 participants who responded, however, five (11%) reported they had neither formally nor informally met for mentoring purposes. Among the five cases, three reported that they were never informed of the mentoring program, one reported that the mentoring relationship was never made official, another said his new colleague was actually quite experienced, therefore

neither needs nor wants a mentoring relationship.

Among the 41 respondents who had met for mentoring purposes, only 17% met at least once every two week to once every other week on a formal bases; half of the respondents claimed that they met formally, but irregularly and thirty-two percent reported that they never formally met for mentoring purposes. Among those participants who met informally for mentoring purposes, 61% met at least once every other week, 39% met at least once a month or irregularly. The majority of the respondents (67% of the mentors, 78% of the new faculty) reported that both of them take the initiative in the mentoring meetings.

Insert Table 1 About Here

The content of the mentoring meetings reported by the menros and mentees covers a wide range of topics, which can be divided into approximately 5 areas: (1) instructional techniques, (2) research development, (3) university and departmental idiosyncrasies, (4) professional development, and (5) practical issues. Table 2 presents these five areas ranked in terms of importance as perceived by the participants.

Insert Table 2 About Here

New Faculty Perceptions of the Mentoring Program

The majority of new faculty (74%) rated the mentoring

program from important to extremely important. There were, however, mixed feelings (see Table 3). Some new faculty who already had some teaching experience felt that the mentoring program was not as important as did those who had little experience. They commented that "the program might be a good experience for those just starting an academic career. For those with experience it might not be that useful."

More than two thirds of the new faculty (79%) reported that the mentoring program provided valuable experiences for them, that they benefited from the mentoring activities (84%) and that they felt more comfortable in teaching (69%) and research (74%). They also felt that the mentoring program helped them to grow professionally (84%). The new faculty members were satisfied with both the quantity and the quality of time spent during the mentoring meetings. It seems, however, that they were more satisfied with the quality (95%) than quantity (74%) of time they spend with their mentor. This suggests that new faculty members want to spend more time than they had with their mentors. They were also satisfied with the matching between their mentors and themselves. However, they seemed to be more satisfied with the matching in content area (95%) and teaching style (94%) than in research interests (84%).

Mentors' Perceptions of Mentoring Program

Compared with 74% of the new faculty who rated the mentoring program as important, 89% of the mentors said that mentoring is important for their new colleagues. All mentors (100%) thought

that mentoring helped the new faculty professionally as compared to 84% of the new faculty respondents.

Mentors were satisfied with the quality of time (84%) as well as the quantity of time spend (84%). When they were asked whether they have benefited from the mentoring activities and if they have gained any new insights through mentoring, only 42% said they gained some insights from mentoring their new colleagues. Fifty-eight percent of the mentors said that they have benefited somewhat from mentoring activities. In fact, no mentors felt strongly that they have gained useful insights into their own working throught mentoring or that they have benefited from working as a mentor. In terms of the matching between the new faculty members and themselves, mentors were satisfied with 75% rating the matching in teaching style appropriate, 84% rating the matching in research interests appropriate, and 89% rating the matching in content area apporopriate. One mentor noted that "whether the mentoring relation will work depends on the match between the individuals. If the the chemistry is right, it will work. If it is just another job, the benefit will be limited."

Despite of the fact that only a minority of the mentors felt that they gained insights into their own work or that they had benefited from working as mentors, 94% of the mentors said they enjoyed working as mentors. In fact, many mentors (50%) volunteered to be the mentors. Some expressed that only those who are willing to work as mentors should be assigned as mentors and that the selection of mentors should be based totally on a volunteer basis.

Insert Table 3 About Here

Other Needs and Expectations of the New Faculty Members

While program participants ranked teaching, research, and publications as important mentoring content, the new faculty members indicated that they would also like to discuss additional topics such as the new faculty members' own research, graduate assistant help (equity in number of hours), number of advisees (an overload), organization of department committees, administrative aspects of overseeing graduate students, tenure requirements, and prognosis for university developing resources to match stated research goals.

Both mentors and new faculty indicated that besides mentoring program, communication with other faculty and colleagues was also a useful source of information in helping new faculty. Mentors indicated that that literature on mentoring in academic environment would be useful information for new mentors to have at the initial stage of the relationship.

Participants' Perceptions on Whether the Mentoring Program is Worth Recommending

While the majority of the respondents (75% of mentors, 78% mentees) said they would recommend the idea of faculty mentoring program to a colleague at another university, twenty-two percent

of the new faculty and 25% of the mentors opposed the idea of the mentoring program. Some mentors opposed the idea of institutionalizing the mentoring program, but agreed that mentoring should be done informally on a volunteer basis on both parts. Several mentors indicated that "the problems is to be helpful without patronizing."

In terms of the length of the mentoring program, 56% of the respondents thought one year was an appropriate length, 12% complained it was too long, and 17% had need for more time. Furthermore, some respondents indicated that for teaching mentoring, the length of one year is adequate, but for research purpose, it is too short.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Faculty Mentoring Program appears to be successful at the initial stage. There was a great need for mentoring among the new faculty members at the University of Albany. The mentoring program was perceived as helping to fulfill that need, especially for new faculty members who were just beginning their academic career. Based on the survey results, no rigid schedule as to time and frequency of mentoring meetings is needed. Both mentors and new faculty members prefer mentoring meetings whenever needed on either formal or informal basis. There does, however, seem to be some need for basic structure to the program in terms of content and guidelines of the mentoring meetings. Despite the fact that the majority of the new faculty members were not involved in the selection of their mentors, both mentors and new faculty were

satisfied with the match in terms of content areas, research interests, and teaching style.

The weaknesses of the mentoring program were that there was limited structure and that there was no follow up after it was institutionalized. As one mentor commented "There was not much of a program. I was assigned (as) a mentor and then that was the last I heard of it. It would be nice if something more formal could be set (.e.g. an informal get together for all mentors and new faculty members, etc)." One new faculty felt that "a minimal structure is needed, otherwise the new faculty would hesitant to impose"

The results of the pilot program leads to several recommendations that could be used to improve this program or other similar programs. First, based on both mentor and new faculty responses, the faculty mentoring program should have some suggested structure in terms of time and content of the mentoring meetings. Second, basic requirements should also be made clear to the program participants prior to initiation of the program. This would include articulation of the purpose, structure and basic requirements of the mentoring program and the mentoring relationship so that neither the mentors nor the new faculty would feel too imposing or patronizing. Program developers might want to consider requesting an initial mentoring meetings of all program participants to set the program on track. At this time, the mentoring relationship and the requirement for initial meetings should be made clear to all participants. If initial meetings are held, an appropriate time might be before the teaching term begin when the new members are most in need of some

immediate help. Third, based on the results of the survey, at least four or five mentoring meetings should be suggested to each mentoring dyad over the first year at times when the new faculty members and mentors see fit. More meetings should be encouraged depending on each individual situation. Other than that, no rigid requirement on when and how often the mentoring meetings should take place seem to be necessary, since the majority of the mentors and mentees prefered to meet for mentoring purpose whenever they see needed.

Fourth, the results support the need for suggested topics and guidelines for mentoring content. According to the survey results, topics on instructional techniques, research development, university and department idiosyncrasies, professional development and some practical issues are appropriate mentoring topics to suggest. Another source of new faculty needs to be served by the mentoring program could be obtained by surveying the new faculty at the beginning of the semester. For instance, new faculty might be encouraged to choose more than one mentor, if needed to, to fit their teaching and research needs. This is especially true in light of the need for volunteer mentors. Because some experienced mentors may prefer to serve as a academic role models while others prefer the research/grantsmanship role, it is important that new professionals be exposed to both models.

Fifth, some kind of follow-up work is definitely needed to check the implementation of the program and problems that need immediate solution. In particular, at the initial stage of the mentoring, a relationship follow-up is necessary to determine

whether the mentoring relationship is working. It could be done, for example, by the department chair, or by the Office of Academic Affairs. More options and forms of assistance other than mentoring should also be offered to meet the new faculty's needs for information on various topics.

Overall, the mentoring program described in this setting appears to be serving a useful function. Of key importance is the parallel in needs between mentor and mentee relationships at the higher education setting and those serving in mentor and mentee relationships in K-12 settings. Further development of mentoring programs in academic settings and evaluation of these programs should pay attention to variables that have been found to be important in public school research. There are, however, some inherent differences. New faculty at higher education institutions, especially at research institutions, have more than one mission to fulfill. In order for the new faculty to advance toward tenure positions, they are expected to be involved in professional activities other than teaching, such as research, publishing, and professional service at both local and national levels. Therefore, mentees in higher education settings may need more than one designated mentors, perhaps, one for teaching purposes and one for research development. Also, because higher education settings are less structured in terms of faculty activities, it is also possible to make the mentoring program less structured. While K-12 teachers have the majority of their time spoken for and may need release time for mentoring, faculty at higher education settings have more flexibility in arranging their own schedule.

The results indicate that mentoring is an important function that should be considered as a part of an academic setting. What shape it take and what variables are important are in need of further study.

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Table 1
Implementation of Mentoring Program
(N = 41)

	N	%
Have Met Over the Semester		
1 to 5 Times	16	39%
6 to 10 Times	14	33%
More Than 10 Times	11	28%
Time Spent at Each Mentoring Meeting		
Less Than 30 Minutes	24	65%
More Than 30 Minutes	13	35%
Formally Meet		
Once a Week	0	0%
Once a Every Other Week	2	5%
At Least Once a Week	5	12%
Irregularly	21	51%
Never formally Met	13	32%
Informally Meet		
More than Once a Week	10	32%
Once a Week	7	23%
Once a Every Other Week	2	6%
At Least Once a Month	3	10%
Irregularly	9	29%
Should Meet		
Once a Week	2	5%
Once Every Other Week	1	2%
At Least Once a Month	3	7%
Whenever Needed	30	73%
See No Need for Scheduled Meeting	5	12%

Table 2
Percentage and Ranking of Mentoring Content Areas
(N = 41)

Content Areas	%
1. Instructional Techniques	98%
2. Research Development	85%
3. University & Departmental Idiosyncrasies	56%
4. Professional Development	42%
5. Practical Issues	39%

Table 3

Percentage of Mentor and New Faculty Indicating

Agreement with Mentoring Program Aspects

Dimensions Rated	Mentor (N = 22)	New Faculty (N =19)
Importance of Mentoring Program	89%	74%
Enjoy Working as a Mentor (a)	94%	
Comfortable in Seeking Advice		95%
Mentoring is Professionally Helpful	100%	84%
Satisfied with Quality of Time Spend	84%	95%
Satisfied with Quantity of Time Spend	84%	74%
Gained Insights into Own Work (a)	42%	
Mentoring Program as Valuable Experience		79%
Benefited from Working as a Mentor (a)	58%	
Benefited from Mentoring Program		84%
Appropriate Match in Content Area	89%	95%
Appropriate Match in Research Interests	84%	84%
Appropriate Match in Teaching Style	75%	94%
Felt More Confident in Teaching	79%	69%
Felt More Confident in Research	73%	74%
Recommend Mentoring Program	75%	78%

(a) Items for the mentors where items for mentors and new faculty are not exactly matching.